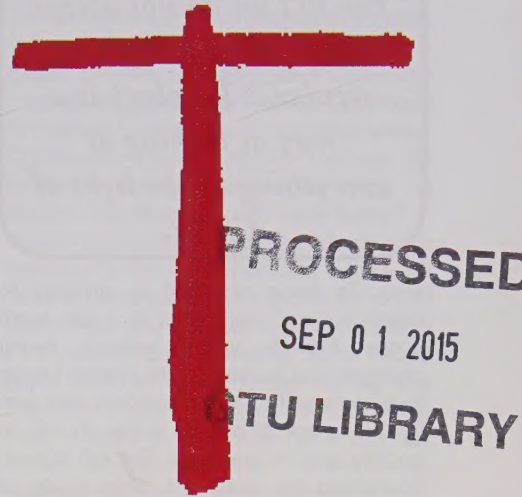


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What is Radical Orthodoxy?

Alison Milbank



In the context of a church not only suffering decline but actively embracing it by allowing the secular world to write its agenda, the movement known as Radical Orthodoxy is an heroic attempt to return to our common roots in the early church, its creeds and its theology of participation, while seeking to take on postmodernism,

and the critique of Enlightenment rationalism within it. For RO, only Christ makes sense of the world from its politics to its cinema, and we seek to restore theology as a way of making sense of everything – and for everyone.

This has drawn considerable numbers of younger scholars and students in many denominations from Presbyterianism to Russian Orthodoxy, but it has attracted considerable opposition, often quite vituperative. We cut across established parties, tending to be politically radical, embracing Catholic Social Teaching with its attempt to critique both capitalism and communism, but seen as 'conservative' in that we delight in the doctrines of the creeds, and assert the value of tradition and liturgy as grounding our being. Addressing contemporary philosophy and engaging in debate, such central figures as Slavoj Žižek or Alain Badiou, means that some of the

writing is necessarily technical and difficult to those untrained in philosophy. But it is essential work if Christianity is to challenge these secular world-views and show that we offer a challenge to a nihilist account of the world as pure power and a violent struggle. We are talking to political theorists, philosophers and cultural critics and we use their language.

I am not a philosophical theologian and for me, the heart of radical orthodoxy is its return to an earlier understanding of how we know God and everything in the world: by participation. I am a creature, and that means I am not God – 'we did not make ourselves' as Augustine imagines the mountains saying in the

Radical Orthodoxy

Frustrated by a 'dialogue of the deaf' between 'conservative' and 'liberal' voices in the Church, and wearied by false dualisms such as those that seek to separate 'secular' from 'sacred', or 'faith' from 'reason', how can we find our way back to the roots of an orthodox Christian perspective that gives rise to a much more holistic view of God's world? Alison Milbank lays out how Radical Orthodoxy seeks to do just that; two priests reflect on the working out of these ideas in the contexts of a parish and a multi-faith Chaplaincy in a 'secular' university; and an alternative point of view is also presented from a participant in forms of mission that have themselves received some criticism from this movement in theology.

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psalms, but my creaturehood means I am God's: I share in his life by analogy and participation. My life is a gift and it comes with a giver.

This was the common view of centuries of common Christian belief and practice and it affects our knowledge of everything

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else. To know anything is similarly to reach out and unite with it. I can learn some French verbs without being changed, but to really learn French I have to give myself to it and become one with it. This is true of our life in the church, in society and in marriage. For full human flourishing we need this deep mode of knowing, as St Francis himself makes us aware. To call the moon his sister is to have this sense of a world all sharing in its difference and variety in the life of God. The peaceable kingdom of the church in its envisioning by Christ – though we fail in practice – is the model we believe we have to offer the world. And our failure means we are always involved in the hard work of reconciliation, and that too, is what we have to offer.

When I was training for the ministry I was taught to do a mode of theological reflection in which the secular world presented a situation, and we were then to 'apply' biblical reflection to it. For RO that is impossible because we do not accept that there is a pure secular, and we offer sophisticated historical accounts of why this is not the case that I cannot even begin to discuss here (see the bibliography downloadable at <http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4/ro/>). For us theology is a way of looking at everything in the light of Christ. I, like some others, have been influenced by the charisma of Fr Luigi Giussani, whose lay Catholic movement, Communion and Liberation, uses all that is best in culture as a way of mission, by which reality is seen always to

be calling us beyond itself. By nature, humankind is made for the transcendent, and we can awake this deep longing in people by offering works of truth and beauty, which precipitate this collision with reality, and so open a path beyond, since things are always more than themselves: there is an excess.

For yet another of RO's heroic projects is to try to heal the separation between faith and reason. This is helped by modern philosophy, which now questions the Enlightenment gentlemanly playing-field of an abstract secure reason that we can all share. This has been deconstructed to show the role of power and perspective in its seeming neutrality. Truth for us is not ticking a box but a mode of participation and in God Truth and Beauty are one. Truth is a mode of life as much as a philosophical idea. Truth matters, however. Without a reasonable faith, Christianity will become a private hobby, without any way of challenging

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structures of injustice. RO hopes to heal other dualities, such as grace and nature, following here Henri de Lubac and others in the twentieth-century catholic ressourcement movement of going back to sources in the early church and Thomas Aquinas. It matters that our whole humanity is so created as to be fulfilled by union with God (teleologically directed in theological language), though the relation between grace and nature is always paradoxical, so that God gives us freely what we desire. Separating grace and nature leads to an autonomous realm of the natural, and out of this bad theology comes a separate secular order. In the recent general election in Britain, political parties lacked very much a sense of the common good. This was because they had no sense of a teleologically-ordered human flourishing. With nothing beyond to hold us to account, politics degenerates into competing self-interest groups. Meanwhile and conversely, religion can become a mode of pious navel-gazing that is not genuinely salvific.

Another important theological concept we stress is mediation itself, which,

thanks to the Trinitarian creation of the world through the Logos and his Incarnation, is central to our faith and makes mediation a blessed thing, not a getting-in-the-way between us and God. Andrew Davison and I made this central to our critique of the ecclesiology and often the practices of the Fresh Expression developments in the Anglican and Methodist churches. We sought to

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show the danger of separating form and content, of fleeing from tradition, not using it creatively, of accepting secular agendas and reproducing them. This too caused controversy as we questioned institutional orthodoxies and the practice again of letting the secular world have a reality it does not deserve.

In our practice as teachers or priests, we find a great desire among young people particularly for challenge, mystery and beauty, and a faith that can be tough enough to stand up to intellectual challenge while offering a complete form of life. If you'd like to find out more about us do get in touch, or look at our online journal, *Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy* at <http://tinyurl.com/nbc9244>. There are several book series connected to us and a sermon anthology is on its way. We do believe the time is ready for an orthodoxy that is no straitjacket but a romance and an adventure. *f*



Alison Milbank is Associate Professor of Literature and Theology at the University of Nottingham and priest vicar at Southwell Minster. Among her books are Dante and the Victorians, Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians and with Andrew Davison, For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions. She edited Josephine Butler: Theology, Prostitution and Social Action and is currently completing a theological study of horror fiction - God and the Gothic - as well as an anthology of sermons radical and orthodox.

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From Theory to Practice: Is there a 'Radical Orthopraxy'?

James Walters



Radical Orthodoxy begins from a rejection of the assumptions of secular modernity. The modern nation state had arisen out of the religious wars of late medieval Europe, adopting the premise that faith needed to be excluded as much as possible from the public sphere. As the founders of Radical Orthodoxy

lament: 'It is a world in which the theological is either discredited or turned into a harmless leisure-time activity of private commitment' (Milbank, Pickstock & Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*). Under secular modernity, the public life of the nation claims to operate on grounds that are independent from religion, deriving its values from sources that claim to transcend any particular religious system. But all this is now being challenged, in both theory and practice.

What we are now realising is just how localised and short-lived secular modernity actually was! The European nation state model may have been exported around the world, but it rarely looked (or remained) as secular as its western theorists envisaged. Now, in our post-9/11 world, the notion of suppressing religious convictions in the public sphere seems rather naïve. Renewed religious movements from Pentecostalism to Hindu nationalism to the so-called Islamic State are capturing the imagination for good and ill in different corners of the world, including those formerly governed by atheist communist regimes. Recent data from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life suggests that the proportion of the world's population who are affiliated to no religion will drop from 16% to 13% by 2050. Secularisation has gone into reverse.

The Radical Orthodoxy project of reclaiming the world by 'situating its concerns and activities within a theological framework' rather than operating on secular assumptions is no longer one confined to academic ivory towers. It is happening all around us. Part

The LSE Faith Centre's objectives and mission reflect some significant post-secular changes that permit what might be termed a 'radical orthopraxy' of engagement with the world.

of the success of the House of Bishops' Pastoral Letter *Who is my neighbour?* on the 2015 General Election is that it set out a fresh moral vision for British public life based on some confident theological language that 'Christ's incarnation confirms the fundamental truth that every human being is created in the image of God. Because of this, we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves.' At a time when popular political discourse is almost completely devoid of substantive vision and values, this is indeed a powerful and highly practical 'reclaiming of the world' for what is sometimes called a 'post-secular' age.

But increasingly, on the ground, this kind of theological re-imaging of citizenship and public engagement has to be done in dialogue across faith communities. Christianity is still the largest religion in the world, but its numbers in western Europe continue to decline and what has led to the post-secular situation of this part of the world has been the immigration of large

numbers of non-Christians for whom faith is a central motivator in their lives. Addressing this issue has sometimes been identified as a blind spot of the intellectual leaders of Radical Orthodoxy who seem more inclined towards some sort of resurrection of Christendom than a realistic contribution of Europe's Christian roots to a more complex pluralist present. So how do we act and interact in a public sphere in which secular principles no longer provide an adequate framework? How do we move from Radical Orthodoxy to Radical Orthopraxy in societies where Christianity cannot simply reassert its former dominance, but must bring its wisdom into dialogue with other faiths?

I want to modestly propose that one such example is the new multifaith centre we have established at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Costing £1.6 million and featuring some world class stained glass designed by the President of the Royal Academy, the LSE Faith Centre's objectives and mission reflect some significant post-secular changes that permit what might be termed a 'radical orthopraxy' of engagement with the world.

The LSE was not founded with any radically atheist agenda (the Bishop of London was the first Chair of the Council), but rather with the conviction that the social sciences required an 'objectivity'

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A snapshot of the dialogue between Rowan Williams (right) and Bruno Latour, a sociologist, (left) on the topic of climate change, in 2014, chaired by the Director of the LSE, Craig Calhoun, in the LSE Faith Centre.

that was necessarily compromised by religious convictions. Religion (then almost exclusively Christianity, of course) was respected as a private matter but needed to be left at the door of the university, having no bearing on the objects of study. As such the founding ethos of the LSE reflects precisely the secular materialism that is the target of John Milbank's critique of the social sciences (see *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*).

The first significant shift that the LSE Faith Centre represents is that many students are not prepared, and should not be required, to leave their faith outside the classroom. The most obvious example of

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Radical Orthodoxy and parish ministry today

Toby Wright



G.K. Chesterton, writing in *The Paradoxes of Christianity* expressed the well-known phrase, 'the thrilling romance of Orthodoxy'. In this passage he stated the following, 'People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There was never anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy'.

James Smith's book *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* gives an introduction to the bold movement that was founded on John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* and both authors invite a response that will re-narrate reality. Radical Orthodoxy is a movement that has sought to stand against some of the so called radical

Rather than accepting a dichotomy between sacred and secular, Radical Orthodoxy draws all into a realm of graced creation as God runs through everything.

theology of, among others, Bishop Spong. It seeks to challenge the philosophy of liberalism and the premise of the so-called secular. Rather than accepting a dichotomy between sacred and secular, Radical Orthodoxy draws all into a realm of graced creation, as God runs through everything.

The movement seeks to critique modern secularism and return theology to its ancient title of 'Queen of the Sciences'. The lens through which we engage with the world is seen to be theology, rather than ethics, politics, economics or other fields of study. Proponents would look back through history to the Church Fathers and to the great medieval thinkers, to the contributions of Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart.

The movement doesn't sit in isolation but stands along others such as Slavoj Žižek's ideological critique and political philosophy, as we see in *In Defense of Lost Causes*. There he offers a critique of economic and cultural norms that draws on religious discourse as a source for political radicalism. What Radical Orthodoxy offers in contradistinction to atheist social commentary is to argue that Christian truth claims (as expressed in the philosophical school following Thomas Aquinas) can out-narrate secular truth claims: Christian truth can tell a better story about reality!

One of the strengths of Radical

Orthodoxy is that it challenges us to avoid the pitfall of comfortable complacency that is so prevalent in the West, and invites us instead to engage with justice at a profound level. Far from Richard Robert's accusation that Radical Orthodoxy is a 'Pyrrhic victory involving a retreat from engaged worldliness', it offers people a Kingdom-lens to interpret the reality of everyday experience and engage at a deep level with that reality.

Radical Orthodoxy invites people to be unapologetic in introducing God into the equation, sharing openly the claims of Christianity. Ann Morisy has written (*Mapping the mixed economy in The Future of the Parish System* ed. S. Croft) that an increasing number of theologians '...suggest that by enhancing commitment to the explicit domain the Christian community can become a subversive force which can model new ways of social policy and social relationship to bring greater congruence with God's promises for his creation'. Morisy goes on to acknowledge the

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difficulty of obscurity and to recognize that the high symbolic nature of church bound symbols is at odds with those of secular society. Yet, as Graham Ward has pointed out in *The Politics of Discipleship*, we can congruently argue that we see a 'new visibility of religion' that reintroduces these very symbols. Ward invites the Christian community to engage with a rereading and rewriting of the Christian tradition back into contemporary society. This rereading and rewriting is a practice that isn't the responsibility of the academy

alone, but rather is one that concerns 'all the micropractices of Christian living and every public attestation to the truth in Christ'.

Within parochial ministry Radical Orthodoxy offers a prophetic voice of challenge. The premise demands that we, the Christian community, have courage to vocalise an expression of confidence in Christian truth and social engagement, which the Church can be said to have shied away from for some time. Of course, the position of those proponents of Radical Orthodoxy isn't without criticism: Critics include Paul D Janz in *Radical Orthodoxy and the New Culture of Obscurantism* and Wayne J Hankey in *Radical Orthodoxy's Poesis*. Hankey claims that Radical Orthodoxy is guilty of 'falsification of the past' and challenges the interpretation of the great historic figures of Plato, Aristotle and Kant.

However, the radical stance offered by this movement opens up a dialogue with Christianity's patristic and medieval roots, which is both fertile and illuminating. In inviting the whole Christian community to see itself as in 'participation' with every other discipline of thought, it challenges some of the reticence that has been seen in the Church's contribution to current social and philosophical debate. For it is, in Graham Ward's words, 'a movement beyond the narrative which binds Christian practice and formation through a deepening sense of the rich interpretative openness of that narrative. The Christian community always waits to receive its understanding, waits to discern its form.' (in *Cities of God*)

More than this, Radical Orthodoxy offers a lens of seeing a relationship between narrative, everyday life and Christian practice. It gives a means of what Milbank has termed 'sacralizing society', rediscovering the transcendent and bringing a new rigour and engagement to parish life. Possibly perilous, and certainly exciting, Radical Orthodoxy is probably heavy, but it is far from humdrum and safe. *f*



Toby Wright is the Team Rector of Witney in the Diocese of Oxford.

Radical Orthodoxy - does it aid Christian mission?

Steve Hollinghurst



My introduction to Radical Orthodoxy was John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory*. Milbank's book, utilising his skill in economics, philosophy and theology was very useful in writing a critique of Capitalism, if at times not an easy read. Like much of the material produced by Radical Orthodoxy it was

aimed at the philosophical academy. There is much of value in Radical Orthodoxy's engagement with philosophical thinkers and theologians within and outside the Christian tradition; a robust advocacy of a Christian vision for church and society viewing all things as sacred and only comprehensible when viewed from within the vision of God in Christ. This is especially so in offering an alternative to nihilist readings of the world and in recognising the importance of issues of power.

I drew on this in my post-graduate study on mission in postmodernity and the New Age movement and Contemporary Paganism. However, as Radical Orthodoxy has developed it has increasingly offered a very different voice to those like myself inspired by cross-cultural missiology.

Radical Orthodoxy's approach to mission is clearest in *For the Parish*. This is a sustained critique of fresh expressions of church and the *Mission-Shaped Church* report of 2004. Bishop Graham Cray, one of the authors of the report has written a response, that can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/qgh3dxm>. As

Cray notes, *Mission-Shaped Church* had a limited brief. I wrote *Mission-Shaped Evangelism* in 2010 in part because sharing the gospel in a cross-cultural situation had not been in that brief. My arguments here draw on that work. With Radical Orthodoxy, I share a concern that the relationship of form and content is not addressed in the assumptions of many evangelistic practices. These evangelistic approaches have been forged in Christendom, and the loss of this faith background amongst children during the twentieth century has exposed that they have little impact on those without it. Radical Orthodoxy rightly spots a tendency to see the answer as a repackaging of the kernel of Christian faith in new clothing. Form and content can't be separated like this. To change the 'package' is to change the message. I would add this 'kernel' thinking shows a modernist reductionist assumption that we can strip the Christian faith down to a core 'seed', whereas in reality there is a 'whole seed packet' that is needed to create the full garden.

Our society has, I would argue, moved away from religious traditions but not religious beliefs, if often no longer those of the Christian inheritance. However, people increasingly explore these in consumer ways. Because people see elements of truth in all religions and spiritualities, but take no one tradition to be true, they tend to create their own belief systems and become clients of religious product rather than disciples of a religious tradition. In such a culture the attempt to re-clothe Christianity can become a rebranding exercise in which the message becomes whatever the consumers want to hear, affirming whatever lifestyle they chose to live. This is what Radical Orthodoxy fears is happening in fresh expressions and other responses to cultural change.

Radical Orthodoxy's alternative seems to be a return to an expression of Catholic Christendom done well in each locality,

drawing inspiration from the medieval scholastic tradition. If this fosters a renewed missionary vision in Anglo-Catholic parish churches, this is a good thing, but I don't share this vision for the whole Church's mission because I understand the church and its history differently. I agree that Paul's understanding of the Church as Christ's body sent in mission means it really does mediate Christ. I also agree that we cannot separate form and content. Equally I share their insight from Wittgenstein that meaning is not formed by the individual but in community, but which community? As Church goes out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, is Christian identity formed with each new cultural community or must the Church remain faithful to the Jewish culture in which Christ came?

Acts shows that the Jerusalem church assumed only Jews could be Christians and conversion to Christ necessitated a Jewish lifestyle. This position did not last and Greeks and Romans became Christians without becoming Jews. For Radical Orthodoxy the debate about this in Acts 15 is about the absorption of the Church into the wider culture of the Empire. To many readers Paul's point is that one does not have to change culture to become a Christian. This is what happened in the Church beyond the Roman Empire, in the West for instance in the Germanic and Celtic churches, and in the East in the Syriac churches in modern day India and China. These expressions of Church were not the same in every context because it was within those other communities that meaning was formed, in line with Wittgenstein, rather than being brought there pre-formed by the missionaries within another community's culture. Indeed

Fresh expressions:

- ◆ an abbreviation of 'Fresh expressions of church', used in a report for General Synod in 2004, called *Mission shaped church*;
- ◆ describes the planting of new congregations or churches that are different in ethos and style from the church that planted them;
- ◆ are primarily for the unchurched, - i.e. for those who have never been to church or who stopped going and are not willing to go back to what they experienced before;
- ◆ a wide variety of approaches for a wide variety of contexts and constituencies, there is no single model to copy;
- ◆ is not meant to be conformed to culture, but it is meant to be appropriate for reaching and transforming a culture;
- ◆ some examples are: a surfer church on Polzeath beach, a youth congregation based in a skate park, a church for skiers; church in a café, pub or school.

Our society has ... moved away from religious traditions but not religious beliefs, if often no longer those of the Christian inheritance.

Radical Orthodoxy's adherence to form in order to preserve content in different contexts is a failure to recognise that each community gives different meaning to the same form and that to preserve content requires different forms in different contexts. This follows Paul who changes his message as he moves from Jewish to Gentile contexts in Acts, using poetry by Epimenides and Aratus in praise of Zeus as the only creator God as part of his message to a Greek audience. All of this suggests a far more positive attitude to culture and religion beyond the Church

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Minister's Letter

Brother Clark Berge, Minister General of the First Order Brothers, writes:

Dear Friends,

Recently the brothers closed Little Portion Friary on Long Island. The decision to do so was very difficult; once taken, everything went quickly.

We were very fortunate that a local charity in Port Jefferson, New York, was interested in buying the friary. Hope House Ministries, founded in 1980, was begun in the Little Portion Guesthouse. Soon they moved to permanent quarters in the village. Thirty years later their need for a larger facility prompted their eager decision to buy the friary.

Hope House Ministries is an outreach ministry of the De Montfort Fathers. They provide accommodation, support, counselling and training for young men seeking to recover from drug and alcohol abuse and addiction. They have decided to call the new facility Hope House Academy at Little Portion Friary. Initially about 20 young men will move in. Their first priority is to enlarge the chapel by removing the back wall; already they have paid to have the ovens in the bakery repaired so that the young men can carry on the work in the bakery. They are excited about the labyrinth and the beautiful vegetable garden too.

The Society of St. Francis is retaining the cemetery. The woodland was sold to the county for

a park. The transfer of the friary and adjacent property will take place on September 3. The brothers are leaving most of the furnishings so that Hope House can start using the facility right away. We are taking our Franciscan related library, some artwork, and the items from our sacristy. Each of us who has been living here will clear out his belongings: heaps of things going right back to the charity shops they came from.

The Province of the Americas will be consolidated in California, with a friary in San Francisco and another in Los Angeles. There are ten brothers in the Province, with the possibility of some postulants, but we are facing challenges with four of our active brothers being very senior in age.

I got to pack the Franciscan library. One of the benefits of packing that collection of Franciscan books was a chance to browse some old favorites and make a quick scan of unfamiliar volumes. I'd never read *Golden Words: The Sayings of Brother Giles of Assisi*, but he was a very bracing companion for me during those days of grieving, packing, letting go. A farmer's son, he joined St. Francis when he was only 18. The two set off on a long walking tour to the coast soon after. His sayings have some of the earthiness of the farm, and the topsy-turvy wit of St. Francis. I am not sure if these are just



remembered sayings or if he wrote them down, but he spoke among other things about the classic Franciscan themes of poverty, love, prayer and contemplation, and the need to work. As I was feeling unhappy about the move and fearful about the future, these words of Giles leaped off the page: 'Remember: the road to victory is Defeat Street!' Things aren't always what they seem. Others who have left houses, fields, and family to serve the Gospel have been rewarded many times over.

Wishing you much peace and all good in the midst of life's vicissitudes.

May the Lord give you Peace.

Clark Berge

Theme Prayer



Gracious God,
Grant that we may be strengthened in our inner being
With power through the Spirit,
That being rooted and grounded in love
We might have power to comprehend
The breadth and length and height and depth,
And knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
Be filled with all the fullness of God.
Amen.

Based on Ephesians 3.16-19, NRSV

Continued from page 3

the Muslim need to pray five times a day (a practice praised by St Francis!) has in fact led the way for a whole range of students to reject the liberal Protestant notion that faith is purely about private beliefs and bring their daily religious practices onto campus. These include the mass, different forms of meditation, dietary requirements, and a range of devotional practices from the recitation of the rosary to Hindu chanting.

The agenda of the Centre is not simply to make space for religion alongside the sports facilities or other 'leisure pursuits'. Our contention is that the crisis of secular logic means that religious wisdom will be essential in solving the problems of the future. Through the events that we hold and the Faith and Leadership programme that we run, we seek to allow students to bring their religious conviction into the academic conversation, addressing issues from the financial crisis to conflict resolution. In October 2014 the Director of the LSE chaired a dialogue in the Faith Centre between Rowan Williams and the renowned sociologist Bruno Latour on the topic of climate change. In the course of the conversation Professor Latour attributed the ecological crisis to a nihilistic and secular idolising of free market logic. He blamed the LSE itself for not challenging this purely materialistic economic thinking and proposed that the religious wisdom arising from the Faith Centre would need to be the 'antidote to the poison produced by the rest of the university!'

We are but one small initiative in one university, but we are very conscious of the contribution to leadership in all sectors that LSE students go on to make around the world. They cannot study theology at the LSE so most would have no idea what Radical Orthodoxy was, but we hope that in giving them confidence to bring their faith into dialogue with the other religions on campus and the different disciplines they study, we are cultivating a 'radical orthopraxy' that can reclaim and heal a troubled world. *f*



James Walters is chaplain to the London School of Economics.

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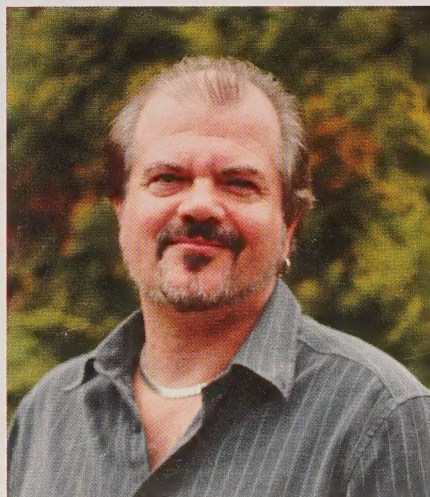
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Continued from page 5

than Radical Orthodoxy offers. That local cultures and religions are part of the community forming Church does not, as Radical Orthodoxy implies, mean an uncritical adoption of culture. It is in the discussion of food sacrificed to idols that Paul talks about becoming a Jew to Jews and a Greek to Greeks; the Church's entering different cultures showed an engagement that critiques and transforms rather than simply accommodates.

Finally, Radical Orthodoxy wants to promote the thought of medieval Catholicism as the only true vision of Church, and yet the implication throughout *For the Parish* is that the true Church is an Anglican parish church. Our contemporary culture brings our global and local diversities together; potentially embracing all that is good in human culture, but also bringing the prospect of violence between cultures and diversities as they clash. In such a context the Body of Christ as an expression of unity with diversity vitally offers God's ministry of reconciliation. If the Protestant church has failed to be this by setting up churches for break-away limbs, the Catholic tradition has tended to the opposite, and Radical Orthodoxy follows suit; creating an understanding of Church that is a procrustean bed upon which the limbs that don't fit can be lopped off. The challenge for mission in our age is to rise beyond both and embrace a truly diverse church that can enable Christ's Body to be born in each culture, but truly hold them together as expressions of one Church that both celebrates the diversity of human culture but reconciles them in Christ. At present Radical Orthodoxy in adopting a medieval Catholicism that sought to confirm all expression of church to its Roman imperial model cannot do this. I believe the future of the Church lies in the other direction. *f*



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The Comm

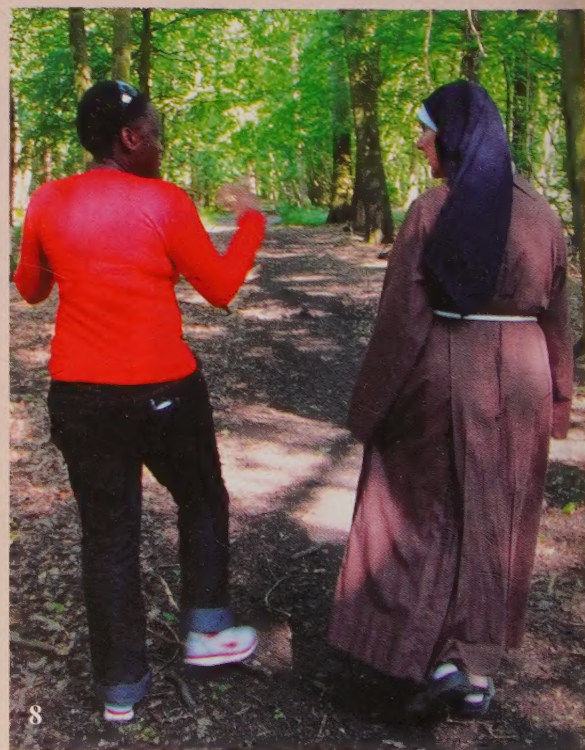
The sisters of the Community of St Clare at Freeland, near Oxford, form the Second Order of the Society of St Francis. They are enclosed, so they live and work within their convent setting. (1) The main entrance to the convent, with the chapel, a much more recent (1961) addition on the right. (2) Prayer is the main focus of their lives, and sung Eucharist for Sundays and major feast days requires practice - and notes for the organist. Along with printing, which includes an array of cards, the guest house in an adjacent property, and wafer baking are the main ways in which the community earns its income. (3) Carolin Clare holds a baked wafer sheet. Jo Hiscox TSSF was assisting with the work when living alongside, last year. (4) Mary Kathleen and Susan Elizabeth packaging wafers ready to send out to customers. (5) Someone has to make the habits! Carolin Clare puts her sewing skills into practice.

(6) Alison Francis feeding the hens. The garden enables the sisters to produce most of their own vegetables. (7) Mary Margaret sketching in preparation for painting. Finished originals and prints adorn the walls of the guest house, the 'Old Parsonage', awaiting buyers. (8) A Sunday afternoon walk in the woods, and Damien hears about a childhood in Uganda, from our resident friend, Christine. (9) Kathleen Marie takes a break from her work in the card department. (10) Mary Kathleen, framed by flowers.

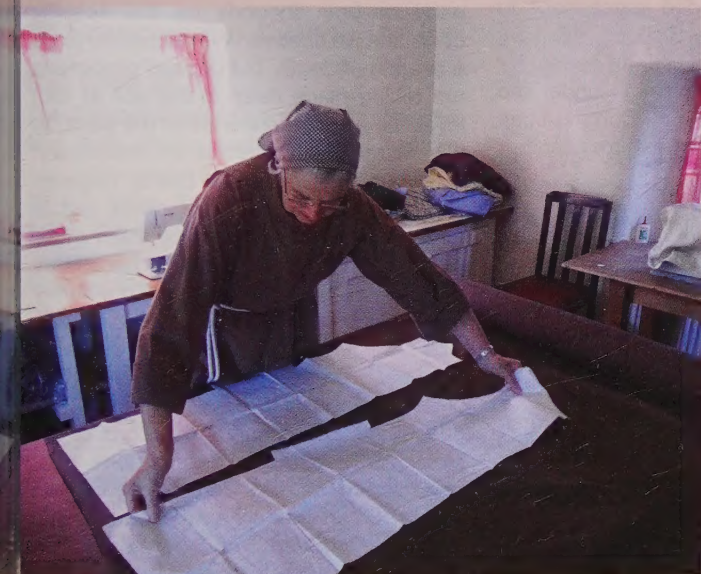
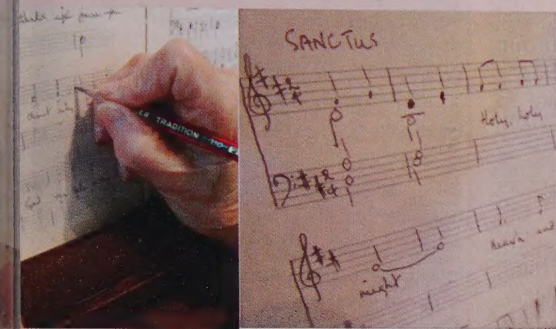
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During November (2015) the Community will not be available for guests, cards, printing, wafers, etc., as most of the sisters will be away for some or all of this month.

Web site: oscfreeland.co.uk.



of St Clare



Community Routes



◆◆ Treasures Old and New

As a result of a day gathering in 2014 when invited 'new monastic' and 'traditional' religious communities met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, a three-day conference entitled 'Treasures Old and New' was offered to a wider group of Anglicans towards the end of April 2015. This was held at the Order of the Holy Paraclete's guest house at Whitby. One hundred people were present: from vowed religious orders, dispersed vowed communities such as our Third Order, dispersed communities which have been in existence for some time and others for only a short time; small residential communities with a clear focus such as that providing hospitality at Holy Rood House near Thirsk; and people exploring the possibility of setting up residential parish-based communities or beginning life with others in dispersed communities.

The common factors seemed to be that people were responding to the wind of the Spirit, wanting to learn from one another, and to share something of their life together in Christ with a group of people in a more intentional way than usually happens in our churches. The noise level at meal times and tea/coffee breaks was considerable as this exchange of interest went on! The 'sessions' were mostly

based on led meditations, which were followed by individual reflection time, and there were small group meetings each day where there was the opportunity to share more of our community experience and aspirations. All three of our Franciscan orders were represented at the conference,

including Benedict, Christine James, Cristian Michael, Gina, Hilary, Hugh, James Douglas, Michael Jacob, Maureen and Sue from the First Order, Margaret Mary from the Community of St Clare, and tertiaries from various parts of the country. The last plenary session provided suggestions to be followed up by the Bishops' Advisory Panel on the Religious Life, an appeal for a more inclusive organisation under the Anglican Religious Communities umbrella, and the request for another conference!

◆◆ CoR

Sue writes:

In May, I was one of four Anglican Associates attending the annual residential meeting of the Conference of Religious in England and Wales – a gathering of nearly 120 leaders of Roman Catholic Religious Communities.

Two sessions led by Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo OFM, Secretary for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, were a highlight of the conference. In his current role, Archbishop Carballo, who is a former Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, takes the lead in matters relating to The Year of the Consecrated Life, which runs until Candlemas 2016. He greeted the Anglicans present especially, and said that The Ecumenical Symposium on the

Consecrated Life had shown him how much we all have in common. This was the gathering in Rome in January 2015 at which Clark Berge presented a paper on Religious Life in the Anglican Tradition, and in which Joyce and Desmond Alban also participated.

Archbishop Carballo re-emphasised some of the core values of Consecrated Life identified by Pope Francis in his 'Letter

to All Consecrated People'. Certain phrases especially resonated for me as the archbishop shared his reflections on gratitude, passion, hope, gospel, prophecy, and joy.

* 'Falling in love is the only thing that can keep the consecrated life aflame'.

* 'Our fundamental mission is to be a living exposition of the life of the poor humble Christ'.

* 'Joy because we know ourselves to be loved, called and sent'.

Assessing the current concerns about the future of Consecrated Life the archbishop commended a realistic attitude in which two key words are crisis and winter. Crisis means a time of decision, and whether the outcome is good or bad depends on the specific decisions we choose. Winter seems to be a season of death, but unseen processes are taking place deep in the soil at root level, which ensure the life of the plant. In this situation two qualities are necessary: clarity and discernment. Clarity requires us not merely to formulate ideals, but to take concrete steps to make them more real in our lives. Discernment, necessary both at an individual and Community level, asks what we must do to further God's will, and requires us to be available to God, ready to be guided. Our discernment must be shaped by the gospel, our charism, and the signs of the times. As Francis said 'I have done what was mine to do, may God show you what is yours'. Moreover we always need to live out our charism collaboratively, in relationship with others whose gifts, traditions and ethos are different.

In conclusion the archbishop commended the prayerful reading of Scripture 'which makes miracles in



A 'pilgrimage' one afternoon included a Eucharist at the old Whitby Abbey



Some of the First and Third Order members at the Climate change lobby of parliament, outside St Margaret's Church, Westminster: Maggie Stirling Troy, Maureen, Andrew Tuck, Richard Jefferies, Micael Christoffer, Angela Tuck, Sue and Gina.



Youngest and oldest: Anselm, Michael Jacob and Reginald.

community', deep sharing of life and faith, and the role of 'fraternal correction'.

◆◆ On the streets...

◆ Franciscans 'Speak up for the love of...'

The Climate Coalition, a group of charities and faith groups that includes Christian Aid, organised a mass lobby of parliament for 17 June. Around 9,000 constituents were there and about 250 MPs were lobbied. The lobby was timed to meet the recently elected parliament, and in good time before the international conference on climate change in Paris in December. We were there to tell our MPs that it is vital that Britain does all it can to persuade the nations of the world to come to a deal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - something they failed to do at the 2009 conference in Copenhagen.

Franciscans of the First and Third Orders were well represented in the crowd. Hugh, along with Hilfield Friary Community members Jonathan and Daniel had come with a coach group from Dorset; Maureen came from Metheringham, Edmund from Plaistow, Micael Christoffer from Canterbury, and Sue and Gina came from across the river in Southwark. We were asked to speak up for the love of the good things our planet supports that could be spoilt by climate change - hence the title of the day, Speak up for the love of...

We Franciscans began the day at an



Tea and cake inside the campervan: Judith Ann, Jannafer and Gina.

ecumenical service at the packed St Margaret's Westminster, a church where Politics and Prayer have mingled for centuries. The preacher, the Bishop of Salisbury, Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, said: 'This is not just our individual concern. It is our Christian concern together as the church. It is the concern of people of all faiths. It is our human concern in solidarity with all people. The world is our home.' He praised the Pope's Encyclical, and also the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Declaration on Climate Change.

After the service we walked a short distance, in lovely sunny weather, to meet our MPs by the stretch of the Thames from the House of Commons and over Lambeth Bridge. Some of them arrived in rickshaws that the organisers had laid on. Later in the afternoon, there was a rally on Millbank.

The Lambeth Declaration, which can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/o9potgv>, was launched on the same day. In it, signatories call on faith communities to recognise the pressing need to make the transition to a low carbon economy.

The lobby was co-incidentally on the eve of the publication of the Pope's Encyclical on climate change and the terrible consequences for our planet if we do not change our lifestyles. While the encyclical is unusually addressed to all human beings, not just to Catholics, it is of particular interest to Franciscans as it is entitled *Laudato Si (Be Praise)*, the opening words of St Francis' *Cantic of the Creatures*. (See review on page 15.)

◆ Protest against austerity

Robert writes:

On 21 June, 250,000 people (according to the police estimate) gathered at the Bank of England to march down to Parliament Square in protest against the Austerity policies of the government. What was remarkable was the broad range of people that formed this coalition in the streets. It went from rather extreme left wing groups to Labour, included the Green Party and various climate activist groups, Feminists, Pacifists, Students, Trade Unionists, community groups etc. Famous artists like Russell Brand and Charlotte Church gave their support, next to politicians like Caroline Lucas, Diane Abbot and Jeremy Corbyn. Only the number of open unapologetic Christians could be improved. Nevertheless, there were countless opportunities to explain to curious

members of a rather secular crowd what Franciscan life is all about and to have general conversations about Jesus, religion and God. Altogether, it was a very positive and encouraging atmosphere, that at times felt a bit like a party because music was a prominent feature of the march and the final rally in Parliament Square. As we are facing the prospect of 'permanent Austerity' (David Cameron, Guild Hall speech 2013) under the new government, this march was only a preliminary step to build up a movement. It would be great, if the Church would play a prominent role in it.

◆ In a 'mobile monastery'

Beverley's vision of a campervan as a base for meeting people, carrying resources and being 'home' for a couple of days at a time to a group of two or three Franciscans, which would also get us out and about more and be a way of promoting the religious life, finally became a reality with the purchase of a vehicle earlier this year. The campervan was



The 'mobile monastery' - the group at the blessing with the Bishop of Leicester.

blessed by the Bishop of Leicester on 22 June, and is ready for the road. Any one who is interested in booking the van and a team, should contact Beverley at St Matthew's House, Leicester.

◆◆ Round up

Johannes Maertens who is life professed with a Belgian Benedictine community has joined us in order to test his vocation to the Franciscan way of life. He is initially living at the Alnmouth friary.

It is hoped that Eric Michael will come to the European Province, from the Province of the Americas, some time in the Autumn, the date being dependent on when his visa is granted.

Damian has moved to Alnmouth, Thomas Anthony to Newcastle and Kentigern John to Hilfield. Benedict has moved to Leeds, which he will use as his base for being Minister Provincial.

In September, James Douglas and Peter Aidan will move to Glasshampton, and Michael Jacob to Alnmouth.

Desmond Alban is moving to the Province of the Americas for a time, to assist with novice formation there. *f*

Focus on Alnmouth

Q. How many Religious does it take to change a lightbulb? A. CHANGE?

A fond perception of Religious Houses is that very little changes from year to year; they are places, so we are told by those who have never lived in one, where time stands still. Anyone who has lived in a Friary will be able to tell you that that is far from the truth! In the Friary of St Francis, Alnmouth we are fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful parts of England and, partly because of that and partly because of the corporate welcome people receive when they come here, we are never short of visitors. Last year we offered hospitality to many hundreds – if not thousands – of people (some coming for the day and others staying for longer) and there is every indication that that will also be true for this year.

Hospitality remains the main focus of the house but we have also seen a real awakening of interest in the Chalet (dedicated to St Anthony of Padua) which was 'earmarked' and equipped a few years ago to provide hospitality to people who might not, ordinarily, find themselves in a Religious house but who have been put in touch with us by one of the trusts

and charities with whom we work in Newcastle. Thanks to the austerity policies of the former coalition and present Government (by which we are all, reputedly, equally affected...) and the resultant reduction of funding to local authorities, we are now finding ourselves ever more needed. This provides a most welcome 'leaven' in the mix and gives our ministry here a distinctly Franciscan ethos for which we are all deeply grateful. Let it never be thought that we are merely a 'middle class bed and breakfast' by the sea! Our hospitality is expressed around two tables: the table of the Eucharist and the Refectory table and it is not unusual to find Priests, Asylum Seekers and Politicians sitting at the same table: a representation, surely, of the great Feast that awaits us in Paradise?

Because of the small number of Brothers resident in the Friary it is difficult to engage with the wider community on a regular basis, but Brothers occasionally find themselves being invited to preach in parishes (some local and some further afield), give Quiet days, or participate in youth events, and there is always a healthy stream of people coming into the Friary even if the stream coming from the Friary is rather more limited than we would like. At the time of writing one of the Novice Brothers is exploring a sense of vocation to Prison Ministry by visiting a local Prison and we are all delighted in this interest.

Living in such a potentially pressured environment we have to protect ourselves

and this we do by having regular closed periods when the Brothers are free to slow down somewhat and to do things as a Community without the daily pressures of cooking and cleaning. One example of this was when, in the week following Easter, the Brothers went as guests of the Cistercian Abbey of Sancta Maria in Nunraw to spend time with the Brothers there. Although the Cistercian and Franciscan ways of living out the Religious Vocation are very different,



Novices spend a significant part of their first three years in community at the Alnmouth friary. On 13 December 2014, Cristian Michael, Robert, David and Micael Christoffer were professed in First Vows, at Alnmouth; Nicholas Alan (centre) was the preacher at the Profession service.



Roz and Yvonne, visiting from St Matthias', Stoke Newington, prepared a special Caribbean supper for all, of saltfish and ackee.



Franciscan and Cistercian brothers at the Cistercian Abbey of Sancta Maria in Nunraw.



Alternating habits: Fr Nivard McGlynn OCSO, Peter Aidan SSF, the Abbot of Nunraw, Dom Mark Cairn OCSO and James Douglas SSF.

nonetheless there was a great deal to talk about as we reflected on the joys – and challenges – of the life. It was a particular joy for us to join with the Monks in the monastic choir for their offering of the Divine Office, united in our wish to praise God. We must pray for that day when we can join not only in prayer but also in the Eucharist and we hope that our link with Nunraw will continue and flourish.

The future is, of course, in the hands of God but we do know that there will be even fewer Brothers next year (and of the six who will live here two are not in the best of health) but we are already thinking about what we can do to make things a little easier for us as a Community and to give us more time in which to engage with the 'world'. f

AMERICAS

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Anglican Religious Life (for Year Book): www.orders.anglican.org/arcyb

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Reviews

John Moses

Divine Discontent: The Prophetic Voice of Thomas Merton

ISBN: 9781 4411 8062 9

Bloomsbury, London, 2014, 242 pp, £20

John Moses' new book looks at the life and thought of Thomas Merton from a new angle. Despite living the highly structured, outwardly quiet life of a Cistercian monk, Merton's hunger for knowledge of God and of himself was driven, Moses suggests, by a kind of Godly restlessness, or 'divine discontent' (p. ix). Merton's great energy for prayer, writing, and human relating owed something, says Moses, to his sense of the incompleteness of things, and the need to keep working and struggling in the face of a troubled world.

Divine Discontent stands out among the myriad literature on Merton as a well-researched, well-written, authoritative account of the great monk's life. It would be a good companion for anyone seeking to learn about Merton for the first time, and also for the many who have already read something of Merton and are looking for an intelligent and refreshing way in. The book has been beautifully produced by Bloomsbury, and includes some well-placed photographs of Merton and the environment in which he lived.

Those who are more familiar with Merton might come away from the book wishing that some of the more biographical sections had instead been devoted to developing Moses' ideas about divine discontent. So much has been written about the events of Merton's life, but relatively little work has looked deeply, as Moses begins to, at the anxieties and nervous energy that energised Merton's dance with the Spirit. The pages Moses spends on Merton's fragile mental health, for example, have the special merit of telling the much-told Merton story in a way that casts provocative new light on the subject. Having enjoyed the groundwork laid down in *Divine Discontent*, I would be keen to read more of Moses' reflections on how restless energy, as well as contemplative stillness, can nourish our life with God.

Philip Seal

University of Oxford

Paul Valley

Pope Francis: Untying The Knots

ISBN: 9781 4729 0370 9

Bloomsbury, 2013, 227pp, £12.99

I came to reading this book not being much of a fan of the Roman hierarchy. However, I read with a growing admiration for the new pontiff and a desire to understand what leads a man like him into being elected to that role.

What I found, as with all great men, was a controversial man. This is due to his conduct and that of the church during

Argentina's Dirty War, a time of horrific violence at the hands of the Argentine military death squads.

The book charts the life of Bergolio, from infancy through a childhood where he was deeply influenced by his grandmother's faith, to adolescence, the birth of vocation, life as a Jesuit, academic, bishop, archbishop, cardinal and now Pope. No punches are pulled. He had leadership thrust on him at an extremely young age, he was made Jesuit provincial in his mid-thirties. Mistakes were made; pain and upset were caused in his attempt to preserve a pre-Vatican II style church. When he completed his term as provincial, he was sent into a sort of exile as the book elucidates.

What emerged from this time of 'humility and humiliation' was a very different man. He had looked into his own heart and listened for the voice of Jesus. Now the enemy of liberation theology had been transfigured into a humble friend of the poor, 'Bishop of the Slums', making enemies in political and conservative Catholic circles.

This book was not thrown together in haste to tell us about the new kid on the block. Rather it is a thoughtful, balanced and thorough investigation of the Pope who styles himself after the Little Poor Man of Assisi. Pope Francis is a work in progress, like St Francis was and just like you and I.

One interesting aspect of the book that demands much thought and consideration concerns questions about the overlap of religion and culture. What can appear on the surface as mere superstition is actually a source of genuine devotion. To add another layer to these questions, there is the whole question of Liberation Theology and the role for instance that Marian devotion can play in the outworking of this theology as a source of hope for the poor and oppressed.

I remain not much of a fan of the Roman hierarchy, rather a huge admirer of the leader of the Roman Catholic Church: a fearless man of prayer and action. I heartily commend this book to anybody interested in this man or indeed stories of redemption and renewal. You will find a man of conservative values with no dogmatic approaches; a man formed and reformed in the crucible of love and pain; a man of zeal but a huge amount of compassion; a man to lead the Roman Catholic Church into a new chapter in its history.

Michael Jacob nSSF

Brian Moloney

Francis of Assisi and his 'Canticle of the Sun' Reassessed

ISBN: 9781 1373 0696 8

Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 174 pp; £55

How welcome to find this book researched and written by an Anglican Tertiary from the York Area. Brian

Moloney gives us a masterly interpretation of our Patron from his particular vantage point, that of a medieval scholar with a deep understanding of Italian history, culture and language, all of which he incorporates into a detailed study of the *Canticle*. And so much more.

He writes with authority about the historical setting of Francis' life and for me in particular he highlights a more credible Francis Bernadone with those earlier ambitions and passion to be a knight who becomes transformed initially towards the Lady Poverty. This highlights his marked courtesy towards all creatures, recognising them as sister and brother, and further, into the five wounds of the stigmata, the 'coat of arms' of the king.

It is Francis' sheer love of scripture, the psalms, the writings of Paul and John and of course the Gospels, that so strongly permeate into his own liturgical writings and prayers and through into the subject poem of this book. Brian then is able to examine the *Canticle* in some really fascinating chapters on composition, structures, and finally a phrase by phrase commentary. Theme and style, language and content, he writes, are perfectly fused into a marvellous artistic unity.

This American publication is part of the New Middle Ages series. It is expensive to buy but there is the alternative of persuading your local library to purchase it!

Damian SSF

Rob Bell

What we talk about when we talk about God: Faith for the 21st Century

ISBN: 9780 0075 5618 2

William Collins, 2014, 240 pp, £8.99

Rob Bell has written a number of books, all of which can be classed as apologia for the Christian faith. They are written in a colloquial style, with plenty of examples from 'real life'. There have been several such in recent years: Francis Spufford's *Unapologetic* comes to mind, as does *The Shack* by William P. Young. With my Thomas mentality I am still looking for another Rudolf Otto to 'update' the sense of the Other (there seems to be nothing left one might call numinous) or a new Teilhard de Chardin (instead of heading towards Point Omega we seem to be rushing to Eliot's *whimper*), to give us an apologia of Christianity consistent with evolutionary theory, a new comprehensive philosophy of religion. Such a book does not seem to be forthcoming though.

The problem is, in Bell's words: 'When we talk about God we're using language, language that employs a vast array of words and phrases and forms to describe a reality that is fundamentally beyond words and phrases and forms'. Which begs the question 'Is there such and is there a need for it?' Ultimately, Bell might say, God is to be experienced, which is also a way of knowing. Blaise Pascal said

that the heart has reasons reason does not know.

Which is not too far from Rob Bell's (writing about St Paul): 'His (Paul's) point is that the same creative bang that formed the universe is unleashed in us through our trust in what God is doing in the world through Jesus. His insistence is that this is extraordinary, in all its diverse and expansionary forms, is deeply personal and readily available and on our side.'

Though easy to read this book is never superficial in a happy-clappy way. On nearly every page there is a moment when you are brought up short and have to think. It is certainly the best little book I have come across for a while. It does not answer my basic quest whether there is a being, an objective reality we can call God.

Faith knowledge is of another dimension of course, and as such this is highly commendable. You'll be impressed too!

Thomas Anthony SSF

Neslihan Şenocak

The Poor and the Perfect – the Rise of learning in the Franciscan Order 1209-1310.

ISBN: 9780 8014 5057 0

Cornell, 2012, 280pp, £39.95

In the introduction to *The Poor and the Perfect* Dr Şenocak describes herself as 'a Turkish engineer in Ankara' who 'had never been inside a church until the age of twenty-three' and who 'decided to write a book on medieval Franciscans'. If this is the sort of book produced by non-Christian Turkish engineers who have never studied the middle-ages then it is a great pity that more have not attempted to do so! *The Poor and the Perfect* is, in my own opinion, one of the finest books written on the history of the Franciscan Order to have emerged for quite some time.

Dr Şenocak begins her study with an extremely thorough – and critical – analysis of popular Franciscan historiography (which suggests that much of what occurred in the period immediately following Francis' death was contrary to his intentions for the Order). This model, Dr Şenocak argues, is fundamentally unstable, situated in (current) popular sentiment rather than historical evidence, and is based on a teleological approach to history in which the evidence is (ab)used in order to vindicate the conviction (prejudice?) of writers rather than the conclusion of the writer being influenced by the evidence. Not surprisingly, Dr Şenocak cites Paul Sabatier's *Vie de S François d'Assisie* as the premier example of this type of exegetical writing seeing it as a hugely unhelpful influence in Franciscan studies. Her conclusion that Sabatier's portrayal of a divide between the (good) 'spirituals' and the (bad) 'conventuals' is underpinned by Sabatier's own anti-Roman prejudice is compelling especially

when one remembers that Sabatier's argument is based heavily on highly dubious evidence supplied in the *Historia septem tribulationem ordinis minorem* by the disgruntled ex-Franciscan Angelo Clareno whose account is at variance with all other independent evidence of the period. That Angelo's account resonated with Sabatier's own (mis)conception of the medieval Church was, one suspects, more important to Sabatier than strict historical accuracy.

Having dealt with this – and thus the implicit critique that learning and the presence of Franciscans in academic institutions was contrary to the wishes of our founder – Şenocak goes on to identify some of the most important figures in medieval Franciscan academia, including Haymo of Faversham, Peter John Olivi and John of Rupella, and describes the sort of milieu in which they lived and taught. She argues that the contribution of Franciscans to medieval academia was huge and that the diversity, flexibility and apostolic nature of the Order predisposed it to make such a significant contribution, which, Şenocak contends, always remained underpinned by basic Franciscan values. Şenocak is not blind to the dangers posed by engagement with what was, essentially, one form of medieval 'big business.' She cites the problems associated with friars being appointed as Lectors in Studia and thus acquiring temporal power; of the dangers of individual Brothers acquiring too many expensive books (a danger which is far from historic!) and of large libraries being acquired by Franciscan houses not so much as an aid to learning as a means of self-aggrandizing. However, these issues were, as Şenocak ably demonstrates, something of which the medieval Franciscan hierarchs were aware and sought to rectify.

In this book Dr Şenocak has not only provided us with an extremely interesting analysis of the place of medieval Franciscans in academia, and she has also used this as a lens through which the whole development of the Franciscan Order in its early stages may be viewed; a development which she compellingly argues was largely consonant with the vision of St Francis (who had, after all, personally appointed the scholarly Anthony of Padua to teach the friars in 1224). This book is a must for anyone interested in this area and/or period in Franciscan history and, indeed, for anyone interested in Franciscanism in general.

Joseph Emmanuel SSF

Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis.

Laudato si',

<http://tinyurl.com/o6sowft>

Pope Francis' Encyclical letter issued on June 18, 2015, is probably the most important and exciting document on our relationship with the environment to be

written in our time. Carefully timed to coincide with the run-up to the United Nations' Conference on Climate Change in Paris this December, it goes beyond this particular issue to embrace the whole subject of 'care for our common home'.

In the true sense of the word this is a 'catholic' document, addressed to people of all faiths and of none, and it draws on the work of scientists, economists, ecologists and theologians from different traditions and backgrounds; there's even a quotation from a Sufi writer! Not surprisingly, since the title of the encyclical, 'Praise be to you, my Lord', is taken from the first line of the Canticum of the Creatures, the spirituality of St Francis plays a significant part in shaping Pope Francis' thinking, as does that of St Bonaventure.

The letter begins with an assessment of what is happening to the planet, including, as well as the changing climate, the issues of pollution ('The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth'), the scarcity for many people of clean water, the loss of biodiversity, a decline in the quality of human life, and global inequality. Throughout, he emphasizes that the environmental crises and those of human poverty and social injustice are closely linked together; there is no way of tackling the one without also addressing the other. He is also clear that both the human and ecological crises arise out of the anthropocentric and profoundly individualist culture, which has been shaping our world view over the past three centuries – we have come to see the universe as a giant warehouse of stuff for our convenience.

In response to all this, Pope Francis speaks of the 'mystery of the universe' in which every creature reveals something of God's love, in which all of us are related and interdependent, (n.b. Brother Sun and Sister Moon), and in which the right to private property is always subordinate to 'the universal destination of goods'; i.e. no-one can claim ultimate ownership of the world's resources. He calls for a new ecology for our time, which sees the world as whole, and which integrates the environmental, the economic, the social and the spiritual. He appeals for conversion to this ecology, a change of heart that issues both in actions of governments and also in small acts of love, responsibility and care for one another and for the planet. Attentiveness, humility, gratitude and praise are the inner dispositions that will shape this new world outlook.

Because *Laudato si'* comes from Pope Francis and carries all his authority, it perhaps marks a turning point in the debate and discussion on the future of our planet; the point at which 'care for our common home' begins to become a mainstream concern, passion and task for us all. Praise be to God!

Samuel SSF

Baba Mpandi: A Saint Francis of the African countryside

Joyce CSF

In March 2011 I was privileged to be a member of a group from Southwark Cathedral visiting their link diocese of Masvingo, Zimbabwe, for the first time. During that time we visited the Shrine of Arthur Shearly Cripps at Maronda Mashanu, located about seven miles from Chivhu, midway between Harare and Masvingo in what appears to be the middle of nowhere. This was obviously a sacred space for the local African people, 'a thin place' of God's presence in the diocese, where each year on the first weekend of August, hundreds of people gather to honour the heritage of this holy man. This stirred in me memories of a book I had read long ago telling his story, *God's Irregular* by Douglas V. Steere and set me on a quest to discover more about this remarkable priest.

I located a copy of the biography above in the library of one of our Franciscan houses and was delighted to secure it for our house library! But I was even more delighted to discover a more contemporary and more personal account in *The Dust Diaries* by Owen Sheers, a Welsh poet and writer, and the great great nephew of Arthur Cripps. His

Wrenningham in the 1930's, where Arthur Cripps first went as the mission priest.

Arthur Cripps embodied the Franciscan spirit in his love for the poor and marginalised and this endeared him to the indigenous people. He walked countless miles not only over the veld but into the hearts of his African brothers and sisters. His poetry, novels and a play entitled *The Black Christ* challenged at a fundamental level the assumptions of colonialism. He battled against government policies like the hut tax and befriended black political leaders. This did not endear him to government or church authorities. In 1930, he eventually severed his formal connection with the Anglican church and described

Baba Mpandi, 'the man who shakes the earth with his walking'.

research took three years, including visits to Zimbabwe to talk with those who personally knew Baba Mpandi, one of the Shona names given to his great great uncle. The name was translated as 'the man who walks like thunder' or 'the man who shakes the earth with his walking'.

In 1901, this young English Anglican priest went to Mashonaland, Southern Rhodesia, as a missionary with the then Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He was also a distinguished poet and a close friend of Fr. James Adderley, who helped to found The Society of the Divine Compassion (SDC) in East London, the first Anglican Franciscan religious community. It was this connection that led to some members of SDC serving the church in

Arthur Shearly Cripps embodied the Franciscan spirit in his love for the poor and marginalised and this endeared him to the indigenous people.

himself as an Independent Missionary to Mashonaland. His diocesan bishop at the time, however, considered him a saint. In one of his poems titled *The Black Christ – At Easter in*

South Africa, he wrote:

I believe, whate'er they say,
The sun shall dance on Easter Day,
And I that through thick twilight grope
With balms of faith, and flow'rs of hope,

Shall lift mine eyes and see that stone
Stir and shake, if not be gone.

He had the means to buy land at the place he named Maronda Mashanu (the Five Wounds) and allowed the Shona people to farm it for free in their way; he lived as one of them, enduring the greatest poverty, sharing his food and clothes with the poor, living in a thatched rondavel next to the church, which he also built.

He was blind for the last decade of his life but he still walked with an African guide, he still wrote by dictation. He died on August 1, 1952 at the age of 83. The Shrine was built around where he lived and where he was buried and has become a place of pilgrimage, still lovingly tended by some of those who knew him and others who acknowledge his holiness and his legacy to the African people whom he served so faithfully. The Franciscan spirit lives on through this man who shook Zimbabwe with his walking. f

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Arthur Shearly Cripps outside his rondavel in the 1930's and The Shrine, in 2014.